A

LETTER

TOTHE

BISHOP of OXFORD,

Occasion'd by his

LORDSHIPS SPEECH

On the First

ARTICLE

OF

IMPEACHMENT

AGAINST

Dr. Henry Sacheverell.

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OXFORD,

Occasion'd by his Lordship's Speech on the First Article of Impeachment against Dr. HENRY SACHEVER ELL.

My Lord,

wonders in France, the very Sound without Unchristian Bloodshed, and Slauther
could procure a compleat Victory: I
hope your Lordship will not be less Famous in
Polemicks, that your Fame may be as loud for the
Latter, as your suppos'd Ancestors were for their
everlasting Triumphs over the Enemies of their
Country; let a Glorious Emulation make your
A 2
Lordship

Lordship endeavour, to be as Famous for your Ingenuity, as they were for Cutting of Throats; this, as I do not in the least question, so I expect but to add one more to the Number of those, whom your Lordship's perspicacity and discerning Judgment has laid Prostrate at your Feet. It is with the Expectations of this Conquest, that I willingly meet my Fate, as glad to fall by the Hands of fogreat an Adversary, to share the same Fate with poor Sacheverell, and both to Lie in the same Common Grave; it's evident to all who Read your Lordship's Speech, The Solidity which fo strengthens every Line, that the greatest Assault can never shake it's firm Basis, but Unmoveable as a Rock shall defie the many Attempts of Truth and Reason, to Subvert it, which raises a just wonder in me, that any should offer to Assault you after so obsolete a Method, which always prov'd unfuccessfull with a party. I never knew of any Govern'd otherwise than by Prejudice, Interest, and Humour, in all my Life. It would be thought, my Lord, the Effects of Madness, and the utmost extremity of Folly to perswade a tir'd jade to perform it's Journey Syllogistically, talk Rationally to an Ass, or Preach Morality to a Brute, nor would it be less Improper to endeavour to Convince some Men by true Arguments, for which Reason, my Lord, I shall forbear so rash a Enterprize, and proceed another way, but as impenetrable as your Lordthip stands, tho' I have neither strength nor Capacity to make any Impression on so great a Man, I may at least, like an Engineer, find out the weakest part, to direct others to a more succesfull full attack, which is the utmost of my Ambition or Aim. Your Lordship begins with the Reflections on a Noble Lord, who among other strange things, mention'd Bishop's Voting contrary to their Doctrines; which, my Lord, is fo far from being strange, that nothing is become more Common; your Lordship cannot be Ignorant of the Truth of this Reflection; one very near to your Lordship, confirming the Truth of that unhappy Charge; for my part, no Body can be more forry than my felf, that fuch Scandal should be given to our Church; but I would not have your Lordship take any offence, as if I thought you one of that Number; but at the fame time tho' the Impression of your Fidelity to our Religion is so fix'd in my Mind, that nothing less than Apostatizing, like that Pious Arch-Bishop Williams, can wipe it out, yet some who have not that due Esteem for you, as my felf may entertain a harsh Opinion of your Integrity, which makes me highly concern'd for the Honour of a Bishop of our Church. My Lord, I have examin'd the Passages quoted by the Doctor in his Tryal, and the forgoing Lines, nor do I find fuch Infincerity in Transcribing of them, as you would Infinuate; if some few were ferv'd in that manner, it was an Impolitick Action, when so many Men were left Unobserv'd equally Learned and Pious, who gave no opportunity to be thus Misrepresented and could do him asmuch Service as the other, it's therefore very improbable that such fraud should be practifed, when there was so little occasion for it, it would be an attempt worthy your Lordships Name and Character, Character, to prove all the Passages mention'd, False and Conterfeit, or that they were contrary to what they faid; if this could be done, I should bid farewell to Doctrine of Passive Obedience. as also the Veneration and Esteem I had for those Prelates, but as this has not been perform'd by any in citing the counter Pages, nor yet by your bare Affertion, I shall defer to Entertain so ill an Opinion of them, this makes me heartily Sorry to fee your Lordship labour to Ruin their Characters at once, by those Foul Aspersions; But in the perufing your Lordship's Speech, this very Paragraph made me Reflect on the Unaccountable alterations of the Times, how contrary the Spirit of our Modern Bishops is to the Humour of the Primitive Ages; they are not now as the Christians formerly were for Autiquity, but so prone to Innovations that they are not content to make new alterations in our Religion, and the State, but our Language too must suffer the awkward trial of their Skill; The word Eventual, my Lord, I am confident is as new as the Dodrine of Refistance, and like that made to serve a turn when fomething else fail'd you; But lest this Digression should be Impertinent, I shall no farther insist upon it, but only desire your Lordship to Speak English for the Future.

I own with your Lordship, this matter is of too tender a Consequence to be thus roughly handled by you; it's not only spoil'd by this Treatment, but Christianity suffers not a little, but with as much Modesty as you excuse your Ability, you will give place to none, for that Plainness and Sincerity which becomes you (you ought

ought to have faid one of the moderate party, we should then not have been at a loss, what to expect from your Hands.) Then as for your incorrectness, you need not be in any pain about that; you are so well known as few will take any notice at all of it. We will next examine what you deduce from your two Propositions, the Foundations of this vast Superstructure, and too weak I am afraid to support the unweildy Bulk you raise upon it. You confess the Scriptures to have made no Exceptions in its Precepts of Obedience, that the Rules are laid down in the most general Terms, but still it's unreasonable to suppose that they had no referve in particular cases, that they may be dispens'd withal; if a Father urg'd by a furious fit of madness should attempt the Death of his Son, it's lawful to avoid the Danger by Resistance, this seems to be the force of your Argument, which is far from proving that general Text of Scripture, may be Subject to particular E ceptions. As for the Resistan e of a Child we must consider that there is an Exemption made in in Scripture, we are not to obey contrary to a Superiour Duty, but the preserving my life against my Father, is an Obligation I owe the publick, to preserve one of its Sub-jects against an illegal Assault, this is above all private respect due to my Father mention'd in the Scripture, besides this Resistance is not properly a Rebellion against him, but only a motion of the Animal Spirits, not guided by Reason; it's no more, than if in Convulsive Fit, I should hold his Hand to prevent his hitting me in the Face. This Exception as it concerns only a brutal, not an Human Action, is Foreign to our purpose, or the meaning of that Commandment; therefore, my Lord, you have not prov'd that where the Scripture delivers a precept without any Exception in any part of the Sacred Writ is left to our Discretion to make one, where, when, and how we please, this Assertion tends not only to the dissolving one simple Article of our Faith, but all the Morality of the Bible; a latitude of this Nature, would open a way to excuse the worst of Villains, as well as expose the weakness of the Book it self in not providing better to prevent those Mischiefs.

Thus I hope the next time your Lordship Votes in fo Honourable an Affembly, you will consider how well worth every Article of our Religion is contending for, like a well manag'd Machine pull out but one Pin, and the whole runs Diforderly and Confus'd. That the Supreme Power is not in the King, you would prove from Sir Thomas Smith who faith, that the most high and Absolute Power of the Realm consisteth in Parliament, the Parliament can give Forms of Succession to the Crown. It's manifest that he speaks here only of the Legislature, that the highest Legislative Power is in the King, Lords and Commons. But, my Lord, the' I may not be so happy in Distinctions as some of the College of Bishops, tho' I am not fo subtle a Sophist as the most strict forms of Words cannot hold me, I can easily make a Distinction between

between the Supream Irresistible, and the Supream Legislative Power, nor be put to such a Difficulty to find an Evasion to make my Opinion appear tolerable as you can in some of your Writings. The Legislative Power in Germany is lodg'd with the Inferiour Princes; the Emperor has no Authority there, but still he is the Supream Irrefistible Power, tho' he enjoys not the Exercise of the least Act of Power amongst them; besides you ought to make some Reparation to the Memory of that great Man Sir Thomas Smith, in misquoting his Words; and being now actually Guilty of what you accus'd the Doctor of in the beginning of your Speech. He could not contradict so many Acts of Parliament which declare the King to be the Supream Power; this is a point I hope out of that respect I have for his Character, that he understood better than your felf. You have no doubt taken the Oaths of Supremacy; you could not but Remember what you have so solemnly in the presence of God sworn to; you'll have the Executive Power in the King, that is, he's a Slave to his People to put the Laws in Execution of their own making. This is so far from giving him any Power, that it divests him of all, and levels him with the meanest. It's true you allow the Prerogative of being Irrefistible while he Acts according to Law, just as a Servant may be faid to be Untroulable; while he Executes his Masters Commands, he deserves not a banging, a very handsome Collusion, worthy of the distinguishing pericranium of a Moderate Bishop.

Bishop, such as St: Paul (and he was no foolish Apostle) never thought of. Christianity is much oblig'd to your Lordship, for some Principles, relating to the State, as it is to some of your Brethren, for theirs to the Church; But your Lordship Condescends at last, that unless there be a Total Subversion, it's not allowable to Refift; but granting, my Lord, your former Affertion, viz: That the People are the Supream Power, and the King the Executive only; you have so weaken'd your own Concession, that it will not stand, for if all Power is lodg'd in the People, it cannot be Unlawfull for them to use it on the most trifling occasions, tho' it may be Imprudent, which as they are judges of it, concerns not me, or you, who are mera puncta, in respect of that vast Collective Body. Besides I understand not what your Lordship means by that phrase, Total Subversion; do you call Suspension for a while of the Laws any such thing? Truly, my Lord, I think that God alone, who i the Searcher of all Hearts, is the better Judge of it. Is not this a tender Case, my Lord; if a Man happens to be mistaken in the Princes Intentions, he incurrs that heavy Sentence of Eternal Damnation, threatned by St. Paul; I remember your Brother Sarum faid, that his Conscience would not suffer him to consent to the Invasion of this Kingdon, 'till he was satisfy'd, that a total Subversion was defign'd, so that you have brought the Revolution to stand on this Ticklish Point; If the People are the searchers of the Hearts of Princes, if their judgments are are infallible, in the Examination of their Intentions, the Revolution is just, but if passion and prejudice can blind their Understanding, then it's a damnable Rebellion; thus, my Lord, you have, according to the Proverb brought your Hogs to a fine Market; you have clearly Condemn'd the Revolution, instead of Defending it; so unfortunate has your Lordship been in your Instances, to use Mr. Hoadly's Expressi-I could, my Lord, to take advantage of this Concession, prove your Speech to be a well studied heap of Contradictions; and as the Bishop of Sarum said, that acting against Law was alone Rebellion, and at the same time justify'd the Rochellers; fo you by a no less Remarkable Obliviousness of your Memory have run into the same inconsistency; but as I despute not to get any advantage of your Lordship, but for the sake of Truth, I shall connive at fuch mistakes, incident to Men whose Brains are turn'd. Your Lordship, alledges an Instance in the Rochellers, as a Resistance made by the . Subjects, to defend their Laws from Violation. by the Arbitrary measures of their Prince, when this could not be their Case, who could claim no benefit of the protection of their Laws, when they had the Supream Legislative Power against them; therefore as your Argument proves too much, it proves nothing at all. One Expression in your Paragraph, of the Reform'd Churches having God's Altars among them; the concern you shew of their being vilify'd alass, has rais'd in some, an Indignation against your Lordship, as if you betray'd the Episcopal Order, by putting the Presbyterian Church on the same Foot with it; but I cannot believe your Lordship, so much of a Wolf in Sheeps Cloathing, I am fatisfy'd, too many of our Church entertain these loose Principles: But I believe those words were casually Spoken, you could have no real meaning (if you have that Sincerity you pretend to,) in that unhappy Affertion; afterwards, if you Read the Letter directed to the Bishop of Sarum, you will be convinc'd, that in citing Bishop Bilson's Authority, you have acted the suppos'd part of Dr. Sacheverell, for you have pick'd the beginning and end, but left the middle of the Sentence to be past over in oblivion. The Dean of Carslile, a Man who has deserv'd fo well of Christianity, and the Common Caufe, has little reason to be oblig'd to you; his meaning was quite perverted, where he fays let others judge, he had before prov'd the Doctrine of Resistance on any pretence whatfoever Unlawfull; the matter made so plain, he refers to the judgment of any discerning Man. It's only a phrase of Speech, it's hard to squeeze one poor Sentence ten Thousand ways, to make an Author Speak what he never thought, and Nonsense in to the bargain. Your Lordship, next would perswade us after your usual Rhetorical empty Fourishes, that there is no distinction between an Absolute, and a Limited Monarchy, if the King may not be Resisted. Is this the difference; then, my

Lord, Power is not in the People of an absolute Monarchy, but only a Limited one, that when a King consents to Govern by fix'd Rules, he is accountable; fo that our Kings by granting privileges to their Subjects, have loft their Sovereignity, and we are in a happy condition. But to leave this, I will return to a free and impartial Examination of your Lordship. You are pleas'd to fay there is no distinction between an Absolute, and a Limited Monarchy, allowing the Doctrine of Non-refistance; then your Lordship grants it to be unlawfull to Resist an absolute Prince, let him act with the greatest Tyranny and Oppression; If then only the breaking a few Laws, not the injury the Publick receives makes fo mighty a change, whence does this proceed? from the nature of a compact? then, my Lord, it is not necessary that the breach on his fide should be mention'd, with the penalty confequent hereupon. Is not this effential to a compact, or can a Man of you Lordship's worth presume to destroy the plainest notions, and make a Total Subversion of Reason, and your self Reign abfolute Tyrant, and usurper over the Minds of the Men. Thus, my Lord, in consulting the absolute Power of the Prince, you are setting one up over us, too apt to be inveigled by your Eloquence, to believe contradictions. Thus, my Lord, you cannot blame us, if we use that Liberty which we enjoy, as English free-born Men, and relift your Lordship's Incroachments. I would ask your Lordship, whether Religion, Honour, and Conscience are so alien to the very Natures

Natures of Princes, that they never feel the blest effects of their Influence, whether it is not fafer to trust to that than the precarious will, the byass'd affections of the populace. How eafily they are perswaded to Rebellion, Forty one is a Witness, how easily they can construe the least Infraction of the Laws, a total Subversion. we have felt by curst experience, it's a pity our Constitution should be call'd a happy one, if it provides not against these mischiefs; nor can it ever prosper with them, being so ungratefully obtain'd; to fecure our Liberties, our Prince may lay his Crown down at the Feet of the Mob, and take it from their hands as an act of their Favour, 'till they pleafe to refume their kindness, and withdraw their Indulgence; he then becomes their abject Slave, and they Lords paramount, Try and Condemn him, nay, what is worse cut off his Head, for Male-Administration. This, my Lord, is matter of fact, nor do we want Men Bloody, Impious, and Revengefull enough to act the same again; but, my Lord, I only beg that Men of your Function, and Order, in the Church, would leave that dangerous practice, of instilling Principles of that nature into the People, 'to rail at Crown'd Heads, and render those sacred Representations of the Almighty, the Scorn and Contempt of the Vulgar; I never could Understand, my Lord, the tendency of those Men, or what their Ambition would carry them to. But your Lordship's Comparison between a Limited, and an Absolute Monarchy is mere cant,

cant, you cannot imagine that France, or Turkey, are more Slaves than we our felves have fometi es been; I always thought it better to Perish by the Diviner Hand of a Monarch. than by an overwhelming Faction, in a Rump Parliament; and it's more credible if we infift upon our Honour, to fall Victims of the Vice-gerents of the Almighty, than be Sacrific'd to the Fury of the Rabble; Whatever prerogatives are affur'd to the Prince for a time, they are rendred fo precarious, and uncertain by the Doctrine of Resistance, that a Crown is rather encumber'd, than fecur'd by them; it's better, according to your Lordship, that the Prince should be Govern'd by the People, than the People by the Prince; these are the Blessings deriv'd to prosterity, fuch as your Lordship, so much boasts of, these are the Privileges, you Recommend to that Honourable House, to be preserv'd Inviolable. They are indeed, my Lord, worth preserving; for is it not exceeding Glorious to have no Superiour upon Earth, to be all of us, your Lordship among the rest, independant Monarchs; this is the levelling Principle, my Lord, which not long ago, made us the most infamous Nation on the face of the Earth, and the very Attempt to bring in the same again, deferves our Remembrance; the happyness of Government, always consisted in Restraining the inclinations of Men, tending to diffolve the frame, or disturb the eace of Society, but this can be no valuable Happiness whi h gives us an equal Liberty of deposing the Good, as well as Bad Princes. It reduces us to a state of Nature, and often to the necessity of excluding the Lawfull Heir (witness King Charles the II.) the dreadful confequences of which we have sufficiently known; nor can I, my Lord, find that ever we received fuch a Frame of Government from our Ancestors; our Laws in no place give us sufficient Reason to think so; nay so far from that, the penalties of Treason are denounc'd against those who pretend to introduce fuch a Frame amongst us, which at the best can only beggar us; our Acts of Parliament have fully declar'd the contrary, so has our Church; and, my Lord, the very Oaths your Lordship has so Solemnly taken, are Witnesses against you. Your Lordship thinks, Passive Obedience an unneces-sary Doctrine, in these Times, as if the QUEEN. was Immortal, and we could defie fate to make us Miserable; but, my Lord, the QUEEN her self, tho' she is the best of Women; our Nation is fo well known to have the Spirit of Contradiction, that the best of Princes have been Ungratefully us'd the Spirit of Phanaticism, and pretended Moderation is still amongst us, to lay that quiet, and to prevent the acting; the sequel of their old play, is a necessary work. King Charles the First, her Royal Grandfather, was so Pious a Man, as it's impossible that any besides her present Majesty could exceed him; yet how menh did we want the Inculcating that usefull Doctrine.

Doctrine; the Sons of Belial were never wanting to defame him, wound his Character and at last Murther him; nor at this time. if we consider the Diabolical Spirit, which Rules that party, their indelible hatred to her whole Family; can she hope for more fuitable returns; their most earnest professions of Loyalty were but the Reverse of what they meant: In the Reign of King James, if Hyprocrifie had not the greatest ascendant over them, their Addresses, and their Flattery could never have arriv'd to fuch an height. Your Lordship, then might have enlarg'd on this Copious Subject, with fome probability on your Side; but fince these evident Demonstrations of their Treachery and perfidy, these pompous harangues fignifie just nothing at all, Your Lordship feems with fo much Earnestness to recommend fomewhat really of the most prodigious concern to us all, but when we Examine into it, we find it's only a Chimera, what our Kingdom never had, unless in Times of Anarchy and Confusion; your Lordship, would cast the greater Odium on the Doctrine, as if none but Jacobites embrac'd it. If all the maintainers of that Doctrine were such Enemies to the Government, it would be foon at an End; what Number of Addresses, my Lord, are daily fent to the QUEEN in favour of it, if all these were Friends to the Chevalier. what

what a strong and Numerous party has he got here?

You have so much Charity for the Prifoner as not to believe that he meant to carry things to fuch an height, but still under the notion of False Brotherhood, advantage may be taken against our Constitution; this I could never understand; does your Lordship mean that our Constitution cannot be preserv'd without the affistance of those False Brethren, or that those odious Calumnies enrage the Meb against the Ministry, which in time may hazard the fecurity of the Protestant Succession? If the first, then, my Lord, you have cast the worst Colour on the Constitution, that it can't be, or is supported by none but Men, endued with Hypocritical Sanctity, and no principle of Honour, or Honesty; but if the second, then your Lordship would have the World believe that their Characters are Suspicious, that their guilt makes them Jealous of the Peoples Rage and Fury; it must be thus, or I cannot see how Preaching against False Brethren can endanger the Constitution: In the beginning of her Majesty's Reign, the Ministry lay under no such suspicions from the Church party; the Government sublisted, nay Flourished then with full as much Reputation abroad as it does now, and

and those were the Ornament of the Church. and State both. Wide enough from the purpose, You bring in their Schism, as if for want of real Arguments, Sly Reflections must supply the place; but, my Lord, their Schism was not so unjustifiable before the Death of - as to deferve that hard censure, you pass'd on them; 'Mr. Dodwell, one of those Separatists you so loudly Exclaim against has fully Confuted that Errour of Refusing our Communion purely to avoid joyning in Prayer for the QUEEN. They did it on another foot. viz. The Lay Deprivation of the Bishops. a Schism which certainly is the most pardonable of any, if we consider that the whole Catholick Church was Guilty of it. in the purest Ages, when there was occasion offer'd; how often does Ecclefiastical Histories mention as unaccountable things as these? nor do I find the Nonjurors to have been negligent, in proving the Reafonableness of it, with as much or more learning perhaps than some Body was ever master of. First, my Lord, prove theirs to be a Schism, before you Rashly pronounce it the most unaccountable one that ever was What they have done fince I have no hand in, I leave it to those who persist in it to defend; but the first, was not fo much out of Ambition, as to affert the Rights of Christianity, which fince the Reformation have been for the most

most part betray'd; to stand up for your Order, my Lord, tho they meet with this return from your hands, however they may diffent from the policies of these Times and the new maxims of Government, they are still Men of Honesty, and Integrity, nor have they complied with the Impiety of the Times, to Curse God and dye; your Lordship, next to as little purpose tells us of the difaffection of some to the Government, and their Seditious Pamphlets, then ferioully enquire whether these are Friends to the Government. No, my Lord, they bid open defiance to it, but still they are not the only Affertors of the Doctrine of Paffive Obedience; False Brotherhood, I confess is an heavy Imputation, but as the Doctor applyed it to no particular Perfons, but invieghed against it in general Terms, our Laws by innuendo's can take no advantage of his Person. It's certainly, my Lord, the greatest Tyranny to have a Jury fit upon a Man's Thoughts, to Condemn him, for only suppos'd Sedition; why is Faile Brotherhood more exempted from Preaching against than other Vices; certainly, my Lord, a Minister of the Go-Ipel ought to exhort against every thing Immoral and Scandalous; but Hypocrify is so prevailing a Sin every where as ex-cuses a more vehement handling than ordinary:

dinary: Your Lordship cannot deny those to be False Brethren, who frequent our Communion, for a place; who pretend Moderation, but in all their Votes and Actions are against the Establish'd Church; these, my Lord, the Prisoner might mean's, there was latitude enough without including the Ministry; what reason is there to apply it to them? is not the very Suspicion a greater reproach to the Ministry, than any the Doctor flung upon it? Again your Lordship blames the Doctor, not for expressing the Doctrine of Passive Obedience in general Terms, but endeavouring to clear the Revolution of that Resistance. Is this fo great a Crime, my Lord, or does it derogate from the Honour of the Revolution. Is it the Glory of the Revolution, that the Supream Power was Resisted? if not, there could be no Reslection on the Revolution in his Sermon.

My Lord, I shall conclude this troublefome work with only this Remark; That
you have not Explain'd what the Primitive
Christians mean by their Passive Obedience, nor any where concern'd your self
with it, as an Article of our Faith; so
that you have given very little Satisfaction
to the World, in your Speech, nor one
Tolerable

(22)

Tolerable Reason why the Doctor, (whose Honesty and Stedfastness has much exceeded many of our B——p's) should be Condemn'd.

I am your Lordship's most Obedient Servant J. J.

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